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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1567

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHROV/AMEMBASSY VATICAN PRIORITY 0846

RUEHMIL/AMCONSUL MILAN PRIORITY 9810

RUEHFL/AMCONSUL FLORENCE PRIORITY 3429

RUEHNP/AMCONSUL NAPLES PRIORITY 3602

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000145

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL UNSC IT

SUBJECT: ITALY HOSTS UNSC REFORM MINISTERIAL

Classified By: Pol M/C Barbara Leaf for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

**¶1.** (SBU) Representatives of 77 countries, 21 of them at the ministerial level, convened in Rome February 5 for an MFA-hosted meeting on reform of the UN Security Council. Although contacts at the MFA insisted the meeting was not a Uniting for Consensus (UFC) event, the guest list and discussion paper circulated in advance suggested otherwise. Attendees included many of Italy's traditional like-minded UFC allies, as well as some others. The U.K., France and Germany were notably excluded.

**¶2.** (SBU) Many countries described similar general goals in UNSC reform, including: greater geographic diversity in membership; increased transparency in the Council's working methods; and better representation of small and medium-sized states. Divergences emerged in the specifics, however. While many countries spoke of opposition to any increase in new permanent, veto-wielding seats, including traditional UFC members such as Argentina, Mexico, Spain, Pakistan and South Korea, African countries held to a unified position, advocating the creation of (at least) two new permanent seats for countries from that continent. Discussion of the veto ranged from those who urged its limited, prudent use, to others, including Sweden and Eritrea, which advocated its abolition. Eritrea also suggested that permanent UNSC members with military alliances with parties to a conflict be compelled to recuse themselves from decisions about such conflicts. Egypt and Indonesia pointed to the inability of the UNSC to halt the recent Israeli military activity in Gaza as a sign of the ineffectiveness and illegitimacy of the Council as currently constituted. Most countries spoke of the need for a wide consensus behind any reform proposal, greater than the two-thirds majority required by the UN Charter.

**¶3.** (C) Comment: The theatrics of inviting 77 countries to a ministerial in Rome illustrate a recurring theme in Italian diplomacy: a preference for style over substance. Contrary to remarks by FM Frattini to the press at the meeting's conclusion, no particular consensus on details emerged in the course of the four-hour event. Italy's motivation in holding this meeting seemed largely to reassert itself as a principle leader of the opposition to the G4 and to show its continuing ability to rally a large number of like-minded countries. With little chance for a substantive exchange in a meeting of such size, the intended audience appeared to be the press, as well as those countries who were not at the table (Germany, above all). End Comment.

DIBBLE